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ANIME STUFF 4

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SPECIAL MAIL ORDER SERVICES ISSUE

This is the 4th in a series of files of comments and reviews of anime items that I have bought. Please direct all comments to me by E-mail or post me a message in the Forum. I also welcome any reviews or comments about anime products or services that you would like to have included in the next anime stuff article. Please excuse any typo's or errors in grammar in these things since I only spend about an hour writing them off the top of my head. But please do send me any comments about any incorrect information contained here. A correction will be placed in the next ANIME STUFF.

- Tom Mitchell
CompuServe Address : 75156,1067

Well, it has been a great Summer for me where Japanese animation is concerned in that I have been able to see so much of it and learn a lot more about it from the other members of the Comic Book and Animation Forum both in the US and Japan. Since I had more time off from school this Summer, my goal was to see as much new Japanese animation as possible. And so far I have been doing pretty well. Thanks to the folks at Wyvern Web Graphics and Books Nippan, I have been able to get just about everything I have wanted to see...although there is still a ton of anime coming to me from these folks, and there is always a lot more anime coming out in Japan. Whew! Anime can be a tough hobby to keep up with. Damn! I am just getting so sick of all this great animation...I can't stand it! (grin)

Anyway, in this issue, I would like to make some comments about the 2 best mail order sources for Japanese Animation in the US: Books Nippan and Wyvern Web graphics. Both of these places have gone through a lot of changes over the past few months in terms of the quality and capability of their services. Listed below is a checklist of strong and weak points

about

Books Nippan and Wyvern Web Graphics that I think sum up their present strengths and weaknesses. This might be handy for those of you who are thinking about doing business with them for the first time. Actually I highly recommend both places...and each service has something over the other that may make you order from both depending on what kind of items you are interested in.

BOOKS NIPPAN
1123 DOMINGUEZ STREET, UNIT K,
CARSON, CALIFORNIA 90746

The Strong Points:

- + Owned by one of the largest Japanese publishing companies, this store features one of the best selection of anime books.

- + Mail order service is fast and reliable...items come via UPS and are very carefully packed.

- + Features a Japanese Animation Fan club that can be joined for a \$12 yearly fee. Fan club members get 20% discounts on all items. A very nice

feature in these times when the Yen is pounding the dollar. I have managed to save a few hundred dollars because of this feature.

- + Catalogs from BN are large and very well done. And they always list a good selection of the merchandise in stock.

- + No hassle over exchanges of defective or damaged product.

- + Walk-in retail store for those in the LA area.

- + Subscriptions to all the popular anime magazines are available, or

you can buy single issues from them. They also sell some of the more popular manga publications with subscriptions available also.

The Weak Points:

- It seems that there has been some sort of management change a few months ago among the people who run the Animation Club and mail order catalog sales divisions of Books Nippan. Unlike the group of folks before

them, the new management seems to ignore written inquiries about product...even when they come with an order. Only a call on the phone seems to work...after a few tries.

- Newsletter/Catalogs for the club members have been slow in coming

for the club members are slow in coming. The last one was published in July 1986 (No. 6 I think it was)! And this was supposed to have

monthly or
bi-monthly updates. The first video and compact disc catalogs were
great
but an update is desperately needed.

- These folks are very hard to special order from...you must have
the
manufacturers item number for the product you are ordering. Without
that, even if you know the product exists but can't get the item
number,
in BN's eyes it doesn't exist. And don't bother to ask them if they
could
check on the availability of any items from a favorite show that is
not in
their catalog. Typical response is "We have no idea..."

- Requests for new catalogs by first time customers are slow in
coming or seem to be ignored. At least this is what some folks I have
recommended to BN have told me. When I first sent for a catalog in
August
of 1986 it took a couple of weeks to arrive. Now it takes much longer.

Summery: Books Nippan is really a great and reliable service. But they
seem have developed very poor relations with Club Members and new
customers over the past 6 months in their mail order division. Also,
even
thought they publish some of the most interesting mail order catalogs,
there have not been updates in months! This makes it hard for me since
I
like to order anime books about favorite shows, but there is now no
real
way of knowing what has come in or what is on hand. Perhaps this will
improve.

WYVERN WEB GRAPHICS
P.O. BOX 560805
ORLANDO, FLORIDA 32856

The Strong Points:

+ Has access to a large amount of the latest anime goods since
they
are the official U.S. distributor of goods from Animate in Japan.
(Animate
is one of the largest anime retail stores in the world. There a
several of
them in Japan.)

+ Willing to do searches for good customers with only a minimum
of
information about the product.

+ Excellent customer service and relations. I have never seen a
mail order service so willing to keep the customer informed about an

order. Of course Wyvern Web is smaller than Books Nippan, so your orders tend to get a lot more personal attention.

- + Good catalog/newsletter listing items in stock and special order items. Also features a nice section of some of the latest anime news.
- + Possibility of CompuServe access. Yes, Wyvern Web is thinking about getting a subscription to CompuServe. This would mean faster mail inquiry response time. It would also be nice to see an electronic version of the catalog updated and mailed to Wyvern Web customers who have subscriptions to CompuServe.

The Weak Points:

- Shipping via US Mail. I would rather see WWG offer an option for UPS shipping since packages seem to suffer a bit more damage in the mail. I just hate it when I see the mailman trying to cram books into our mail box with the rest of the mail! I would gladly pay for a speedy 2nd day air option on larger orders too.

- In the catalog, I would like to see a larger listing of which of the videos are also available on LaserDisc and what the prices are. There are a lot of videos listed that I also know are available in the laser format.

- Of course this is not as good a place as Books Nippan for anime publications. They are thinking about the idea of adding magazines, and I was told that they may know more about this in the Fall.

Summery: The service from WWG is outstanding! Customer relations and special ordering are their strongest points. Although they are a smaller business than Books Nippan, WWG's relation ship with Animate gives them equal footing in being able to get the anime merchandise you want. I have heard some folks comment that Books Nippan is cheaper for some items, but I look at it this way: WWG is a smaller group, and the excellent service and product searches that they provide make up for any additional

costs.

Well, that's it for this ANIME STUFF edition...I feel the need to go watch some Laputa...Next time out, more comments on videos, BGM's, and other anime stuff.

<<<Tom>>>